

MILLSTONES.

A play

by

Fradel Stock.

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Dramatis Personae:

Wise Mack, a miller.
David (his sons.
Ben)
Ruby, Mack's wife.
Myrtle, Ben's wife.
Crazy Don.
Hugh, a grocer.
Girl Ear of Corn
Boy Ear of Corn
Cabbage witch
Miss Onion
Mr. Radish
Three Knights of Spinaeh
Three Sister Tomatoes
Six Orphan Pease
The Beatle
Prince Carrot
Beau Wind
King of Spades
Mr. Garlis
Mr. Chicken Bone
Farmers.

Place: A village in a new England state.
Time: Present.

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MILLSTONES.

SCENE I.

Midsummer. A portion of a vegetable garden occupy two thirds of the stage. A patch of maturing grainfield joins to the left. When the curtain rises everything is immersed in twilight. Gradually it grows lighter, until finally a golden dust half visibly descends from on high wrapping the plants in it and inflaming the yellow of the grainfield. The foremost plants are uprooted, and all are of a size to accommodate a human being. There is seen a huge cabbage lying next to three tomatoes and a bunch of spinach leaves. A radish and Spanish onion rest next to the tendrils of a vine whose bulging pods give promise of well developed pease. Inherent in each plant is it's spirit, shaped humanly and rooted in the base of it's shell. All remains in immobility until there appears a ray of light increasing in volume and versatility, a combination of the most brilliant colors conceivable. It floats over the scene. As it wavers alternately over each unit, the spirits of the respective plants begin to appear rising from their outer garbs. The first to ascend out of the unfolding cabbage leaves is a figure of the conventional witch type dressed in rags. She is seen stretching out her lean hands after the vacillating light. As it passes by her she slips back into her abode so that only her head remains visible, pursuing it longingly with her eyes. Next to rise is the spirit of the onion, a plump damsel with an enormous bosom dressed tight in violet satin. She too reaches out with her comparatively small arms for the ray and sinks desolately back. Third to emerge is a group of mailed warriors in helmets, drumming their way out of the spinach leaves. The ray hovers a while over their heads, circles and flows on. Their drumming subsides and they too remain immersed to their breasts tilting their helmets after the ray which sinks a little lower, almost to the level of a half opened pod where are seen six green globes of pease. Aware of the light they roll over on the other side protruding six heads in green tight caps of half pea globes. They crane their necks as far as they can. The next to be gleamed upon is the radish, a gentleman with a constitution dressed in black with a yellowish suave countenance, a prayer book in his hands. He also is seen rising twiddling his thumbs after the ray, which on blinking over his bald pate shoots upwards abruptly. The last to strain after the light are the sister tomatoes, clad in red satin dresses; but evading them it lowers further to the left over the grainfield and vanishes in the distance.

CABBAGE WOMAN

Well, I never! Son of a chimney sweep!

MISS ONION

I wish you would not use profane language! For shame! That's what comes from associating with the lower classes!

MR. RADISH

I agree. Hail and brimstone!

MILLSTONES.

MISS ONION

Of course we all want the darling little angel (Pointing upwards after the departed light) who carries the great secret...each wants to be first to carry it to the gate of Many. And if God wills that I get it I shall enfold it in my bosom and...

1st KNIGHT of SPINACH

Oh ehuek that mush!

MISS ONION

I refuse to answer to the likes of you!

2nd KNIGHT of SPINACH

Listen to the blue hot mama!

MISS ONION

There's one thing I can say, and mind you it's the last word you'll ever hear from me...all I want to say is, you're a back number. You'll go the way of the tonsils and the appendix...you're... (A volley of drumbeats drowns her voice, as it subsides she is again heard) You're doomed...You're...

Mr. RADISH

I agree. What this world needs is...(Again a volley)

3rd PEA

I shall go forth out of here...into the world... I shall catch the light. I am the only one that can walk in this garden...I have a tail...(Rolls out a white tail formed after a new shoot and a germinating pea)

Mr. RADISH

Ya would, would ya?

2nd PEA

You stay right where you are. This place is good enough for you.

3rd PEA

It is not. I'll be going soon.

1st PEA

It's easy to go out, but it's not so easy to come back...

Mr. RADISH

You'll burn your wings little butterfly...

MILLSTONES.

MISS ONION

Aw be yourself...

1st SISTER TOMATO

Isn't she awful!

MISS ONION

Say, where do you come in?

2nd SISTER TOMATO

Don't answer.

MISS ONION

Is that so!

3rd SISTER TOMATO

A fine place for debutantes...

MISS ONION

Shut your traps! You're neither sweet nor sour...One needs an aphrodisiac to enjoy you...why, if it wasn't for me...

Mr. RADISH

I agree.

MISS ONION

That's all you can do. "I agree" why if you were a man...

Mr. RADISH

I shall be man if God wills it.

1st KNIGHT of SPINACH

What kind of man?

Mr. RADISH

Hail and brimstone! There shall be a gnashing of teeth and a casting out of...(A volley drowns his voice)

3rd PEA

I shall go forth with the light into the cheek of a lovely maiden...

MISS ONION
(Screeching)

M I L L S T O N E S.

What! You'll go right into the sewer! That's the place for you!

Mr. RADISH

Right-o.

MISS ONION

What do you think of the small fry?

Mr. RADISH

The nerve!

3rd PEA

We'll see what we'll see...

MISS ONION

The idea.

Mr. RADISH

What this light needs is your ample bosom...

1st KNIGHT of SPINACH

Listen to the old weasel...

1st SISTER TOMATO

I wish I hadn't been born...

2nd SISTER TOMATO

I'm going away with the first cucumber.

3rd SISTER TOMATO
(peevish)

If I don't get a snappy peppy pepper I shall rot!

Mr. RADISH

If God wills it and I get the light I shall advocate hundred per cent...

1st KNIGHT of SPINACH
(sings)

"I lost a leg in the navy I lost a leg in the navy.... "

Mr. RADISH

Brinstone! I shall advocate...(volley)

MILLSTONES.

3rd KNIGHT of SPINACH

Hey, pop, how about preparedness?

Mr. RADISH

If they put me in the salad, why not?

3rd PEA

(Making an effort to roll out rises and falls alternately)
I am going out into the world...

2nd PEA

Remember you'll regret it.

4th PEA

I heard two ants gossiping on the roof, there's a beetle abroad.

3rd PEA

I don't care. I'm going out to live my life...

5th PEA

Don't blame us if you want to come back...

1st PEA

Listen to reason... Look at me, the oldest. It would really be more befitting if I...

3rd PEA

(Rolls out from her groove. She is dressed in a light green velvet suit terminating in a white tail; she keeps rolling forward)

I am out! I am out! I can walk!

6th PEA

Now our big sister is gone!

(They all hide their faces in their hands and cry)

MISS ONION

Now she's gone and done it! Can you beat it?

1st S. TOMATO

Would you believe it of a little orphan?

2nd S. TOMATO

MILLSTONES.

It's the only way.

3rd S. TOMATO

She'll get trampled under foot. I couldn't do that in my frail costume.

2nd S. TOMATO

You know it's not so much the light for light's sake, as being released from bondage. Oh, for the joy of moving...to be able to move.

Mr. RADISH

The beetle! (Hides)

ALL

Where, where? (Commotion)

1st KNIGHT of S.
(Rattles his sabre)

Coward, why don't you go out and fight?

Mr. RADISH
(hidden)

What with? You have your weapons but I...

2nd KNIGHT of S.

Hail and brimstone!

3rd KNIGHT of S.

False alarm!

MISS ONION
(fanning herself)

Phew...terrible heat...

1st S. TOMATO
(condescendingly)

What are you afraid of? He won't touch you...I heard he's a gentleman of good taste...

MISS ONION

Won't he though? (Raising some of her ~~lives~~ indecently) The deeper it goes the sweeter it gets...

Mr. RADISH

Don't I know it...
(The debutantes giggle covering their faces blushing)

M I L L S T O N E S.

1st S. TOMATO

Isn't she the limit!

2nd S. TOMATO

Low!

3rd S. TOMATO

Vulgar!

3rd PEA
(Rolling about)

I can walk...I can walk...

2nd PEA

Only down hill...

Mr. RADISH

What was all the hubbub about? It's really a shame that the army whose business it is to...

THE BEETLE

(Comes crawling, sniffing at the plants, who timidly shrink back into their garbs. He comes across the pea and grabs her. The latter struggles rolling out from beneath his legs)

3rd PEA

• Help! Help!

THE BEETLE

Come here cutie...(Grabs her in his arms and crawls out left.)

SISTER PEASE
(lament)

Oh-h-h...She's gone...Our little sister is gone... (The plants begin to emerge)

1st KNIGHT of S.

What happened?

MISS ONION

"What happened"! Didn't you see? The poor thing...(cries) the darling...I was always so fond of her...why didn't you go out and fight you big bully?

1st KNIGHT of S.

How about you sister?

MILLSTONES.

Mr. RADISH

Brimstone! Before I ever looked around...Before I ever had a chance...

MISS ONION

Tell it to the flies! I know you...the only fighting you ever did was when you were thrown at a man's head...

Mr. RADISH

I hope I shall yet have a chance to prove myself. If God wills and the light... (The cabbage woman is again seen to emerge and look upwards)

1st S. TOMATO

This is what happens when one gets a swelled head...(The rest nod)

MISS ONION

(in a stage whisper)

You're a quarrelsome pack all of you..and meanwhile...the old witch..she's watching out for the light...you mark my words, she has something up her sleeve...wait'n see.

Mr. RADISH

My love, no cause for alarm. The only time she can beat me is when she is being cooked.

MISS ONION

My hero!

(The cabbage woman cranes her neck all fellow suit. The light reappears from the left and begins to sway over the grainfield. Finally it is seen to sink amid two ears of corn. Released they skip to the foreground. They wear the costumes of wheat spikes)

BOY EAR of CORN

Do you have it?

GIRL EAR of CORN

Sh-h-h-h...

BOY E.o. CORN

Oh...where...where is it...?

GIRL E.o. CORN

I...It's... I swallowed it...It's in me...(They embrace)

MILLSTONES.

MISS ONION

Can you imagine, it went to the lower classes...who needs bread nowadays?

Mr. RADISH

Brimstone!

1st KNIGHT o.S.

That light --it must be red.

Mr. RADISH

No respect for law and order.

2nd PEA

And to think our little sister sacrificed herself in vain...

1st S. TOMATO

Look at the clumsy dress.

2nd S. TOMATO

No taste at all.

3rd S. TOMATO

I wouldn't associate with the likes of it if you paid me for it.

(The two ears whisper to each other smiling delightedly.)

1st KNIGHT of. S.

I say rubes, don't you get swelled heads, and think you can skip around like beetles...It's the wind done it...I have no respect for a light that chums with yokels...

THE CABBAGE WOMAN

(To the ears)

Hey you, Would you like to have your future told?

BOY E.O. CORN:

Would you like to hear the old woman?

CABBAGE WOMAN

I know all. I told everyone in this garden about the great light coming...The Godlight.

GIRL E.O. CORN

MILLSTONES.

I know enough.

BOY E.o. CORN

What is it?

GIRL E.o. CORN

It's not yet time to tell.

BOY E.o. CORN

I know why you won't tell me...Now that you have the Godlight you are going to lord it over me. And you were always an obedient sweetheart...And may be later you'll cast me aside altogether...

GIRL E.O. CORN

No. You shall always be next to me.

BOY E. O CORN

Still I'd like to hear the old woman, if you can't tell me...
(Goes to the cabbage woman) Well, here I am...

CABBAGE WOMAN

Well, let me look into your heart (Separates a few bristles) If you keep next to that hussy...

BOY E.O. CORN

No abusing language! Remember she is my future wife...

CABBAGE WOMAN
(Laughs derisively)

"Wife"...taskmaster you mean! Well, you can still escape your slavery. Steal the light from her and bring it to me...You shall lack in nothing...I promise you a life of plenty.

BOY E.O. CORN

Bring the light to you? That...is impossible.

CABBAGE WOMAN

Why?

BOY E.o. CORN

Oh, because she's swallowed it!

CABBAGE WOMAN

Swallowed it!

MILLSTONES.

BOY E.O. CORN

And besides -- I wouldn't do it if I could. I love her.

CABBAGE WOMAN

A curse on you!

(Girl E.o. corn approaches diffusing a brightness, the witch shrinks somewhat, but still points a threatening finger at both.)

You shall be thrashed

BOY E.o. CORN

What for?

CABBAGE WOMAN

For the fun of it.

BOY E.o. CORN

For the fun of it?

CABBAGE WOMAN

Wait, that isn't all. As soon as the very life is crushed out of you shall be put between two millstones and...crushed!

BOY E.o. CORN

You lie! Sweetheart, don't believe it! (Girl E.o. corn smiles)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Wait, that isn't all. As soon as the very life is crushed out of you, you shall go into the fire!

BOY E.o. CORN

Fire?

CABBAGE WOMAN

(To Girl E.o. corn)

Well my beauty, why don't you tell him I'm a liar? You know the truth, don't you? I say, it's still time for both of you to save yourselves, if you would only consent to...

GIRL E.o. CORN
(Laughs)

Are you afraid sweetheart?

BOY E.o. CORN

Not with you.

MILLSTONES

CABBAGE WOMAN

Hear that? She admits it's the truth. Well, do you both want to be roasted alive?

GIRL E.o. CORN

It's worth it.

CABBAGE WOMAN

You mean you do want to be burned to death?

GIRL E.o. CORN

Burned to life, you mean? Fire...The sacred fire...We'll only hide there for a moment...only for a moment...together with...the Godlight.

CABBAGE WOMAN

Aren't you afraid of death?

GIRL E.o. CORN

What is death?

CABBAGE WOMAN

You'll be a long time knocking at the gate...The gate of Man... And do you want to be ground and burned and....

GIRL E.o. CORN

It's worth it.

(She draws her mate after her, both exeunt left.)

ALL PLANTS

Hear! Hear!

CABBAGE WOMAN

(Shakes her fist after the pair)

You shall not get your man!

CURTAIN

SCENE II.

In Wise Mack's. A room furnished in the typical New England village style. Two windows, center, are entering on a small patch of garden running up to the Pawtucket River. One door R. center, leads into the open, another R. into the kitchen, and the third left into the young couple's room. The windows afford part view of a flowermill whose waterwheel churning the waves into white foam shoots iridescent sprays into the air. The swishing softness of the lashed water and the rhythm of the machinery form an organized harmony, that is more troubling than soothing.

RUBY

(A woman of about sixty is making dough. She leans out of the windows at regular intervals. Now she calls:)

Donnie! Donnie!

(As she stands bent out CRAZY DON enters quietly through main doors. He is dressed in illfitting clothes of odd colors, barefooted with unkempt hair.)

CRAZY DON

Wow!

RUBY

Oh! Seared stiff! Crazy! (Scraper her fingers with a knife)
Donnie... scrape the trough? Yes honey? Make you a swell butter-
cake... 'sbig 'sthat!

DON

He dum arum tum, diddle allie day!
(Laughs, sticks out his tongue and runs out the main door)

RUBY

Hey you crazy, come back!

MYRTLE

(About thirty, brunette, frail and goodlooking enters left with a piece of goods)

Ma, let me try this on you. (Tries a waist on Ruby and titvates her)

Don't move!

RUBY

He'll be right there at mealtime don't worry...

MYRTLE

Knows no better.

MILLSTONES

RUBY

Knows how to be selfish all right.

MYRTLE

More's the pity.

RUBY

"Pity"! If he ~~was~~ not my kin I'd...

MYRTLE

How did he get that way?

RUBY

Too much learnin'. Knew all that's in 'e First Reader by heart.

MYRTLE

LITTLE Bennie...

RUBY

Now you're starting it... Much better off then he grow up to be crazy...

MYRTLE

Here's your David... The learnin' he's got, an' he ain't crazy...

RUBY

Kneek wood.

MYRTLE

Ma...er...does he look like Een anyhow?

RUBY

Nohow.

MYRTLE

An' they're brothers.

RUBY

Ben' taller'n him, though your Ben has curly hair.

MYRTLE

I hate curly hair...er...because it's always full o' flower...
Don't you think he can protect his hair at least?

MILLSTONES

RUBY

Got to tend to his job.

MYRTLE

"Job"!

RUBY

If I'd minded things like that --Well time to clear the oven.
(Lifts the trough)

MYRA

Wait I'll take the measure!

RUBY

Lets o' time, soon's get done by Christmas. Hope Dave comes home for the holidays this time.

MYRTLE
(Alert)

Think he might?

RUBY

You know 'bout Pa's writin' all those letters to make him come home, well we had a talk yesterday: 'Case he don't come home this time Pa's goin' to New York anyway.

MYRTLE

S'far s' New York?

RUBY

Why not, Pa's got the nerve of a president. That's a why he's called Wise Mack. Always had a flair for wild ways in him...He'd forsaken home an' hearth long ago if it wasn't for the job an' me...

MYRTLE

Only thing I ever hear in this place is "job".

RUBY

Job's the main thing. Everybody knows that. That's how he'd kept Dave in the big cities. Make 'm a big man. Worked his fingers to the bone in this yer mill.

MYRTLE

Why don't he ever write 'bout what he's going to be, an' how long it'll take him?

MILLSTONES

RUBY

Didn't Ben ever told you?

MYRTLE

Ben don't care to talk about him at all. Why?

RUBY

Well, duno. S'pose he's jealous. Got to do all the dirty work, while Dave...

MYRTLE

Why didn't you send Ben to get learnin'?

RUBY

Didn't care to.

MACK

(Enter C. Over sixty but erect, though very grey which fact is accentuated by the flower dust. Holds a telegram.)

A wire.

RUBY

Oh!

MACK

Don't get sceered. There's nothin' wrong. Dave's coming home.

MYRTLE

Dave!

RUBY

Seared the wits out o' me. When?

MACK

Due here any minute. Comin' by the twelve o'clock.

RUBY

Twelve o'clock? Why he's about ...

MYRTLE

It's four now.

MACK

Take'm some time to get here from the station. Seven miles. Stop in the village most likely to look aroun'.

MILLSTONES

RUBY

He's long due.

MYRTLE

May have lost his way. It's over fifteen years since...

MACK

Was sixteen when he left. Old enough to remember. Can't forget your home 's quick s' that.

RUBY

Always had a fine memry. Gee, I do like to have a look at him...

MACK

How 'bout a bite for'm got anything handy?

RUBY

(Snatches up her trough)

Sure!

(Exit kitchen)

MYRTLE

Pa...er...wouldn't you like to...change your clothes?

MACK

Change my clothes?

MYRTLE

(Smoothens her hair in the glass)

Yes...

MACK

These yer clothes are good enough...These yer clothes are feedin' him...Nothin' to be 'shamed of.

MYRTLE

True...still, for his sake...just for once brush the dust, I mean the meal off your hair...

MACK

The meal? The dust? It's not only the hair as got the dust...

MYRTLE

If you don't care, at least let Ben do it.

MILLSTONES.

MACK

Let him. Who's holding him?
(Starts dusting off)

MYRTLE

Pa...Do change your clothes...

MACK

Shucks...

DAVID

(Comes with a handbag. He's neatly dressed. His face seems more sensitive than strong. There is a tinge of bitterness in everything he does. Remains by the door. The group contemplate each other for a while.)

Pa!

MACK

David!

(Shake hands)

DAVID

Where is Ma?

MACK
(Calls)

Ruby!
(To David)
She'll hardly recognize you...

DAVID

How's Ben?

MACK

Fine. Workin'. This is Ben's wife.

DAVID

Ben's wife?

(Myrtle nods, both shake hands.)

RUBY
(Reenters)

There is going to be roast chicken--

(Sees David and remains dumb-founded for a moment, then utters an inarticulate sound and rushes up to him.)

MILLSTONES.

David!

(They embrace)

RUBY

Did you know Pa's goin' to Chicago?

DAVE

No. Was he?

MACK

You came her by the twelve o'clock?

DAVE

Walked. Didn't know myself I was coming. Not till the last minute
Things turned out so...

RUBY

Pity you didn't do it sooner.

MACK

You know 'sfar 'smoney's concerned--

DAVID

(Unpleasantly touched)

That's why...

RUBY

Myrtie, ain't you going to call Ben?

MYRTLE

(Had tried hard to conceal her
embarrassment by sewing diligently
responds eagerly)

Sure!

MACK

I'm going to send him in.

(To Dave),

Guess you'll want to rest up?

DAVE

Not much.

MACK

Be in later. Soon's you're rested. There's a rush job. (Exit C.)

MILLSTONES.

RUBY

Oh, roast must be burned to a cinder!

MYRTLE

I'm going to look after it.

(Exit R.)

DAVE

How long since they've been married?

RUBY

Year 'n half now. Don't you remember from the letter?

CRAZY DON

(Runs in, eyes David and remains motionless with a frozen sound in his mouth.)

Gin.....

RUBY

There he is again!

DAVID

Who is he?

RUBY

Don't you know Donald, your cousin? My sister Ray, her boy?

DAVE

Oh...Is he still...?

RUBY

Worse'n ever.

DAVE

Don, come here!

(Don approaches mechanically)

Do you know me? (Don nods)

RUBY

's dumb 's anything...

DAVE

Answer! Yes?

MILLSTONES.

DON

Yes.

DAVE

(Grips his head, Don jerks nervously backwards)

Quiet!

(Don remains standing still, Dave looks him piercingly in the eyes and lets go of him.)

RUBY

Davie...you know...?

(No answer from David. Ruby attempts to renew the question several times, but does not bring it further than a dumb gesture.)

DAVE

(Hands Don some change)

Here.

DON

Two bits!

RUBY

Two bits! He's sense enough for that...

DON

It's mine! It's mine!

(Runs out G. and collides with Ben carrying a sack of flour on his back. He's 28 but looks much older. Looks worn and shabby.)

DON

Ouch!

BEN

Begone or I'll thrash the life out of you! By golly!

(Drops his load. Exit Don sticking out his tongue at him.)

RUBY

Bennie, look who's here...

MILLSTONES.

(Dave offers his hand which Ben accepts coolly. Myrtle opens the door slowly, peeps in and then enters.)

BEN

H'lo.

RUBY

Did you see Pa?

BEN

No, I'm comin' from the barn.

DAVE

Ben's changed...

BEN

So are you. Well, how did you make out there?

DAVE

Hard to tell.

BEN

Hard to tell?

RUBY

(To Myrtle)

When they was little, they always used to fight, remember Dave?

DAVE

Yes, I remember.

RUBY

Your husband always used to holler for Dave's plate.

BEN

'Cause he always got a bigger share!

RUBY

He was the oldest!

BEN

'Course!

MILLSTONES.

DAVE

And do you remember the post you set up and charged admission to the river a penny a piece? And way you used to beat 'em up when they stole past you?

RUBY

Well, he was a kid.

BEN

What if I did it? I ain't ashamed of it none. It's not everybody got the same luck... One gets everything given him for the askin', and the next fellow got to grab it himself... matter of luck...

(Whispers something to Myrtle, lifts his sack and carries it into the kitchen. David smiles enigmatically.)

RUBY

He's sore 'cause he's doin' all the hard work, see? Never goes out.

MYRTLE

His own fault...

RUBY

Well, somebody's got to be on the job. 'Specially now, since the leak. Got to work about the penstocks all the time. Rake the rack an' pertest the wheels from floatin' scum an' grease. Get down in the wet trench every cold and snowy morning when there's anchor ice... Pa... his bones ache him... means in his sleep...

MYRTLE

His own fault. Why don't they repair that leak?

RUBY

An' where are you goin' to get the money? There was an engineer here 'bout two years ago, had a look at it-- fore you got married-- asked 3000 dollars.

DAVID

What for?

RUBY

Got to put in a new rack... slats're too big, an' new puddling in the trench... That's what causin' all the trouble.

MYRTLE

How about the attack? You remember what the doctor said, don't you?

(Ruby motions her to keep quiet, Myra fails to notice it and talks on.)

HILLSTONES.

You remember when he dropped like dead and...

(Notices Ruby's motion and shuts up)

DAVID

When did he drop? What happened?

RUBY

Oh, it's nothing. Just got hit a little, that's all. It's passed now.

(David looks doubtful from one to the other, lights a cigarette nervously and starts walking up and down the room)

MACK

(Enter G.)

Can't find him..

RUBY

He's already here. They even 'collected their old tricks...

MACK

They did, did they?

(Casts a significant look at his son and goes into the kitchen.)

DAVE

(Not having noticed his father's exit and in a belated response)

Pa! Ma! I wanted to talk to you all--

(Myrtle makes a motion to go away)

Wait...you can hear it too.

HUGH VINCE

(Enters G. He is a well-fed ruddy-cheeked individual with an attempt at city dress. About thirty.)

Heard you have a guest...Thought I'd drop in...

(To Dave)

How's tricks? Looks like you don't know me...

DAVE

I don't.

(Hugh purses his lips scornfully)

MILLSTONES.

RUBY

Don't you know Hughie, the grocer's boy? Owns the grocery all by himself now.

HUGH

Don't you remember this?

(Points to a scar on his forehead.)

DAVE

Oh, it was you killed the cat...

HUGH

That's me... Well, how did you make out?

(David ignores the question)

RUBY

He made out fine.

HUGH

'Cause you know, many a guy -- ~~how's that songt-goes out~~ "rearin' as a lion, an' come back meek as a lamb"...

DAVE

Ma, please call in father!

RUBY

Yes, sure.

(Exit kitchen)

HUGH

(To Myrtle)

How is it you're loafin'?

MYRTLE

What's that to you?

HUGH

Gona tell your man on you...

MYRTLE

Go ahead! Keep on meddling!

HUGH

Where would you be if it wasn't for my meddlin' (Exit kitchen)

DAVE

What does he mean?

MYRTLE

Oh because he gets the farmers to come here.

MILLSTONES.

DAVE

How's that, for nothing?

MYRTLE

Gets commission.

DAVE

So why do they put up with him?

MYRTLE

That's what I'd like to know. But they won't listen. Ma's afraid he might spoil business. He's friends with the farmers. Ben's keen on him.

DAVE

And so he bullies everybody.

MYRTLE

He can't bully me. Nobody can bully me. I do my bit all right.

DAVE

Do you work hard?

MYRTLE

Only with the cow and chickens--the bit of garden. Sometimes help Ma with the dough...and...

DAVE

And?

MYRTLE

There is the washing of course--an' scrubbin' the floors. Once a week there is butter an' cheese--

DAVE

How about Ma?

MYRTLE

Ma's doing the baking. It's for the market. Oh, here, everybody must work.

DAVE

Everybody?

MYRTLE

I mean only country folk. Of course it's different in the city...

DAVE

Would you like to live in the city?

MYRTLE

I'd love to. I'm just dying to live in the city...

MILLSTONES.

DAVE

Are you sure you'd be happy in the city?

MYRTLE

Sure! ~~Oh, I'll live!~~

You're a baby...

DAVID

(Laughs, pinches her chin)

(Ben Mack Ruby and Hugh come from the kitchen Dave and Myrtle retreat instinctively from each other. Hugh scrutinizes both of them with a smart Aleck expression.)

RUBY

Davie, here's Pa. You wanted to talk to him?

HUGH

(To Dave)

Come home to stay?

DAVE

(Ignores the question)

Have a talk later.

BEN

You can talk now all right. Hugh's a friend of the family.

MACK

Why, is it some secret?

DAVE

No secret, but...

BEN

So why all this fussin'?

(Don enters quietly, unperceived, sits down in a corner sucking a sweetmeat.)

HUGH

If that was a hint fer me, I can walk out, but no need o' makin' a fuss 'cause I too'd like to know how you made out.

DAVE

(Irritably and with a hostile look at Hugh)

I see...well...since...

HUGH

Your Ma told me you 'zamined Don same's a doctor, you know 'bout__

MACK

Leave him be! If he choose to tell ye you'll know in due time...

MILLSTONES.

RUBY

First let him have a bite,

MACK

Give him a chance, can't you see he wants to say somethin'? (Silence)

DAVID

You always wanted to know my plans--

BEN

Yes,

DAVE

When I left here fifteen years ago, it was with the understanding that I should study medicine. I wanted to be a doctor then...

RUBY

Used to talk day an' night 'bout curin' people...

DAVE

I know. I did make a start, but -- didn't pass. Something else absorbed my attention. I realized it after I'd spent two years at medical books. I could not then tell of the change. And as you know I always avoided mentioning the subject, because-- It's hard to discuss this thing in writing. It needs explanation. Personal explanation...

HUGH

We're not such big fools hereabouts...

DAVE

You always wanted to know whether I'd already been labeled with some degree. The tag. And I --with me it was not important. Modern science with its miracles appealed to me more than that. To lead a life of research--pure and undisturbed, seemed to me worth while to live for...

(Ruby utters an admiring sound)

MACK

Sh-h-h!

DAVE

The doctor's degree has a relatively small value today.

BEN

Doc Burt's not so bad off...

HUGH

Bet he'll say a professor's worth nothing too...

MILLSTONES.

DAVE

Absolutely nothing.

BEN

Nothin's worth while, eh?

HUGH

Looks like it...

DAVE

There is one thing that is worth while...The seeker, the earnest seeker.

BEN

The seek--

DAVID

The seeker after truth!

(A pause of general embarrassment during which Ben blows his nose into a bandana and Hugh coughs smartly.)

RUBY

You don't say--

MACK

Sh-h-h-h! (To Dave) Ye, but where will you find truth nowadays?

DAVE

By the word "truth" I do not mean what you men understand as ordinary truth in contradistinction to a lie, that is not important...

HUGH

"Not important" listen to that...

DAVE

By the word "truth" I mean the great realities of life...of motion...of space...of light...secrets that you can only get at in a laboratory...by means of delicate instruments, those little twisted tubes and bottles and...stinking gases...

BEN

Stinking--

MACK

Sh-h-h-s!

DAVID

The mystery of matter...

RUBY

Matter--

MILLSTONES.

DAVID

(Suddenly aware of the futility of his speechifying steps in distraction and bangs his fist on the table.)

To find out what's in here! This table!

BEN

This table?

(Scrutinizes the table, all follow suit.)

HUGH

I'll tell you what's in this table if--

MACK

Sh-h-h-h!

DAVID

There are things you can't talk about!

HUGH

We're not such blockheads as you think...

MYRTLE

I have a full set of Shakespeare.

DAVID

(Smiles bitterly)

To make a long story short: It's hard nowadays to accomplish anything in as big a city as New York. The spirit of industrialism has got hold of everything...It's hard to get a quiet corner all to oneself. One is constantly on the go. One is always restless there. Ever since the war, the world's pace has become hastier. Whither it tends nobody knows. Revolutions do not only happen in political life, but also in the minds of the people. Characters are being remolded overnight to serve the new times. The pulse of the world in general has become unsteady. Everything is unsteady. There are practically no subsidies for this kind of work, here, in this country. Those that have no capital of their own are being eliminated. Nowadays, in order to be a student one needs money. Lots of it.

MACK

I did everything I could to make you a learned man...spite of all the the village laughin' in my face...

DAVID

I know, and that is the reason I came home. Here in this quiet nook, away from all those monstrosities of steel and stone, that round one into constant hellish action--peace--peace-- It's peace I came after. To be able to work and seek...seek.

MILLSTONES.

BEN

Seek-- what?

DAVE

The secret. My secret. My great secret.

MACK

A secret?

DAVE

A secret that if it gets to be known will shake the world in its...

BEN

So you came home to stay?

DAVE

Yes. There I lacked that peace. Aside from the fact that you're harrowed by the spirit of restlessness you simply lack the means. It's simply a question of bread...

BEN

An' we here thought --

DAVE

When I wrote that I was earning money, I told the truth. Some private lessons, a little book-keeping and accounting for a few minor firms; but you understand, if you do that kind of work, you can't do much of anything else.

MACK

For my part--you can do all the work you want--you'll get everything.

RUBY

You'll lack in nothing.

BEN

For my part you can sit an' work here till doomsday.

HUGH

So that's that, eh? You didn't make out well after all! How goes it in the song? "Goes in roarin' like a lion any..."

MACK

Shut up, will you? I say, Davie, what kind of secret? We're all by ourselves...

MYRTLE

I can go out...

BEN

You stay right where you are!

MILLSTONES.

(32)

MACK

Maybe you'd like to go into the other room? You an' me?

RUBY

Why are you nagging him? Don't you see it's all about surin' Don!
Didn't I tell you? (David walks up and down the room heedless of the questions hurled at him)

MYRTLE

Maybe it's something that'll make folks stay young forever? I read about it in a book...

HUGH

Maybe it's a thing to make everybody smart, even the cows and hens?

BEN

An' maybe it's a thing to get rid of all the work, so's everybody can loaf? (Pause)

MACK

Maybe it's something to fight death?

DAVE

(Stops, contemplates his father, then walks up to him very near and utters one forceful word.)

More!

ALL

(In turn)

More! More! More!

MACK

More?

DON

(Emerges from the background and sings crazily:)

Ho dum arum tum diddle allie day...

CURTAIN

M I L L S T O N E S.

SCENE III.

Three months later. A vegetable stand outside a grocer's window, bearing the name of Hugh Vinal. The plants of the first scene are seen again, but this time arranged in crates and baskets. There is now added a number of various other produce foremost of which is a bunch of carrots. The first to rise is Miss Onion. She is now hung with many strings of pearls that weigh rather heavily on her big bosom. An awry diamond tiara crowns her stray locks and sparkles in chorus with pendant earrings and bracelets. The three sister tomatoes rather wrinkled now, are also well bejeweled, having green emeralds strewn all over their red satin dresses. They wear topaz bands around their foreheads. The green velvet pease have iridescent globules slung over their green caps and suits. The mailed Knights of Spinach have their Mail Hauberks woven in fire opals; the hilts of their swords are set in rubies and amber. The Cabbage Woman's rags are now hung with turquoises, her three cornered hat is set in amethysts. Mr Radish has on his vest a huge chain of sapphires with scarfpin and studs to match. Out of the bunch of carrots, five in number, four are locked up within so that only the outward form of a usual carrot is seen; but on rising of the curtain the shell of the fifth breaks open out of which emerges the form of a youth red-haired with a milk-white countenance in an orange velvet suit and cone-shaped hat. He looks around bewildered.

MISS ONION

You-ho-o!

MR. RADISH

Yes, my love...

MISS ONION

How do I look?

MR. RADISH

Splendid my dear!

MISS ONION

I do wish you were a little more sincere...Less of a ninny. One never knows with you...

MR. RADISH

Well then, to my notion -- you looked a little more natural--

MISS ONION

There there... Stop kicking, will you? What do you expect after three months prison in a dungeon?

MR. RADISH

You asked me...

MILLSTONES.

MISS ONION

You must have the last word! (After a pause) Well, why don't you say something?

MR RADISH

(Flops his hands in despair)

The only thing I can say is, that you'll be grabbed first.

MISS ONION

(Feeling her crown)

Do you really think so?

MR. RADISH

I'm positive. I only hope they buy me along with you...

MISS ONION

Don't worry about that, we have so much in common...We usually appeal to the same taste. Only I would suggest that you behave with a little more decorum. You're out in the market you know...civilization. One must appear as one of the world. In the first place quit your "brinstone"--

MR RADISH

I can't help it, it's in me.

MISS ONION

The only thing I can say is, that if you don't improve in manners you'll be taken for some low-down...And I do hope for some gentleman of good manners...

1st KNIGHT of SPINACH

A gentleman? You? Ha, ha, ha!

MISS ONION

Who do you think you will get?

MR. RADISH

Hopes for an heiress...

1st SISTER TOMATO

To think we had to have these for company all the journey through...

2nd S. TOMATO

Look at these vulgar diamonds! It wasn't enough for her that she grabbed all the pearls from Morning Dew, she had to put on these imitations from the sink!

3d S. TOMATO

A tiara, imagine...(Sees 2d S. tomato casting enticing glances to all sides)

MILLSTONES.

Say, aren't you ashamed of yourself?

1st S. TOMATO

Flirting with everybody!

2d S. TOMATO

If you don't like it, you can help yourself...

MISS ONION

These spinsters give me a pain in the neck.

3d. PEA

Let's stick together. Whoever adopts one, will have to take the rest. (The other pease nod.)

MISS ONION

What do you think of that, the shrimp too expect to be bought, ha ha ha!

MR. RADISH

Pity, they're orphans...

MISS ONION

Pity my eye!

1st K.o. SPINACH
(To the others)

Watch me work and start the real thing between them... (Turns chuckling to Mr Radish)
Hey, pep! Why do you let yourself be bullied by her, why don't you go out and--(Rattles his sabre)

MR. RADISH

(In a stage whisper)
She's stronger...and besides-- she's sentimental and convincing. The minute she begins to cry, they sympathise...

CABBAGE WOMAN

Hush, somebody's coming. A customer.
(All try to look their best)

MISS ONION

Don't tell me you expect to be bought!

CABBAGE WOMAN

Lousy pack...Already they have forgotten the Godlight...

MASTER CARROT

The Godlight, and what might that be?

MR. RADISH

Didn't you hear? And who are you if I might make bold enough to ask?

HILLSTONES.

MASTER CARROT

Who me? I am the Prince of Sales!

1st S. TOMATO

Look a prince...

3d S. TOMATO

Why, didn't you know? (Pointing at second S. Tomato.) She's been making eyes at him...

2d S. TOMATO

What of it? They say he's kind and sweet-tempered...

3d S. TOMATO

Most likely he'll get a shrew. They always do, you know...

MISS ONION

Poor dear, he needs a little smothering...

2d S. TOMATO

Listen to the lady with the sink imitations!

CABBAGE WOMAN

Hush, a customer! (Silence and a preening up in expectation)

MISS ONION

Don't you go a hushing no more, and searing the wits out of me!

1st S. TOMATO

To listen to that noisy person one would think her diamonds are real...

MISS ONION

(To Mr. Radish)

I say me dear, did you hear the one about the old maid?

MR. RADISH

Hush my dear...don't start a row...They're very much below. It's envy bursting out of them, because you outshine them all. After all shine talks...

MISS ONION

They all begrudge me the habit of jewelry...Don't I have to lay by something for a sunny day, don't I?

BEAU WIND

(A gentleman of leisure enters left. He is dressed in a garment of flowing autumn-red gauze, purple silk hat and cravat to match. The white starched bosom lends it a touch of evening dress. He twirls a cane in his violet mittens, and walks deliberately, contemplating this and that plant in turn.)

ALL

(Joyously)

Beau Wind! Beau Wind! What's news? What's news?

1st S. TOMATO

Oh Sir Wind, do tell us what's news! You have looked in at the grocer's window, haven't you? Are we going to be sold?

2d S. TOMATO

Are there any customers abroad?

M I L L S T O N E S.

Shake old man!

1st K.o. SPINACH

2d PEA

Uncle Wind, are we going to be separated?

MR. RADISH

Well well, of all insects! Since when is it that you last carried me on your back? Ages I should say...Has life been kind to you?

MASTER CARROT

Don't fret the gentleman, gently...suavely...

(Beau Wind stops with Miss Onion, she begins to make sweet faces.)

MISS ONION

Well, have you thought over my last offer? Of course I know you're a born wanderer, and it'll be mighty hard on one to get used to your roaming ways, but if you should decide to settle down after all... Oh, if you must lead this kind of life...there could be found a way to settle me on your back, and we two...

(Beau Wind wanders on stops with Cabbage Woman and grins more broadly)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Say, there is a little matter I'd like to get wind of. You know we are two ears of corn abroad...one of them has...I'd like you to keep track of them...

BEAU WIND

Why?

CABBAGE WOMAN

None of your business! And say, don't you pretend with me...We know each other... I've ridden more winds, than ever you'll ride cabbages... and I know what I know...If I spill the beans on you...

BEAU WIND

Well, what can I do for you?

CABBAGE WOMAN

Track down the pair of them, particularly the female, it is she who... (Whispers in his ear, he looks up in amazement, then whispers a reply.)

MISS ONION

He speaks to the old hack.

MR. RADISH

Well, he prefers this type o' woman...don't blame him...

MISS ONION

He's seen too much of life, that's why. Flowers and dung...and now he wants a cabbage for a change...These gentry are getting their way too easily. They're being pampered too much...

MR. RADISH

Utter lack of law and order.

1st K. of SPINACH

The soak is out o' sorts today.

M I L L S T O N E S.

2d KNIGHT of S.

Nobody home.

(Beau Wind lifts some of his draperies and rose petals begin to fall out.)

3d Knight o.S.

Don't you see he comes from a wedding, he's reeking of perfume, the old pander...

BEAU WIND

If you give me a leaf... I'm rather cold, and sleepy. Was up late. Wedding of the nobility.

CABBAGE WOMAN

Rose marriage?

BEAU WIND

United some bleeding hearts.

(Tears a leaf off her and places it around his neck grinningly)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Wait, give me a pinch of snuff! You know the kind I like...the poppy seed brand... (Beau Wind gives her a red poppy, she laughs with a toothless jaw.)

Son of a chimney sweep!

BEAU WIND

Hell-cat!

(Exit right, turns back and takes the chain off Mr.Radish's vest.)

MR. RADISH

What are you doing? It's downright robbery!

BEAU WIND

Chase me! (Exit)

1st KNIGHT o. S.

Rather hard on you pop...

MR. RADISH

Graft! That's what I call it! I don't so much care for the loss of the article as for the breach of the most sacred principle of private property! Wonder why he didn't touch you--

1st KNIGHT o.S.

One doesn't get in bad with the army, you know. He's a wise guy. Avoids big crowds. He might get caught you know and kept a prisoner. It's only when you have to fight single-handed that he's a hero.

MASTER CARROT

All I can say about the gentleman is that he is sweet with the sweet.

1st KNIGHT o. S.

Aw, wipe your nose, sugar-boy!

(Master Carrot laughs)

2d KNIGHT o. S.

What do you think of the boob, he thinks it's a joke...(All laugh)

3d KNIGHT o. S.

I told you a wedding of the big guns... Nobility.

MISS ONION

"Nobility? What's nobility my dear? Nowadays we believe in equality. The Flower people are all very well, but you can't eat them."

MILLSTONE.

Not useful. Besides there is as much cupidity about the privileged classes as about us. They only smell where there is money.

3d KNIGHT o.B.

They can't stop smelling even where there is money, can they?

CABBAGE WOMAN

Quiet! He told me all the news. We're all going to part. We're sold!

(Commotion, the S. Tomatoes embrace)

1st S. TOMATO

Oh, at last...

MISS ONION

(Begins to cry)

Oh dear...

MR. RADISH

And to think I've been robbed of my jewelry! They won't believe I'm a gentleman...

1st KNIGHT o. S.

What's that you're sayin' Ma Cabbage?

CABBAGE WOMAN

You heard me! No need of wasting breath. I say, the grocer is coming to take you away when the clock strikes three!

(All in turn!)

When the clock strikes three!

1st S. TOMATO

Where are we going?

CABBAGE WOMAN

That's the first sensible question! You three spinsters are going to be canned!

ALL S. TOMATOES

(Lament)

Oh!...

MASTER CARROT

Dear Madam, would you mind telling me?

CABBAGE WOMAN

You are going into a chicken soup tonight!

(Master Carrot rejoices stupidly)

3d. PFA

Grandma, and us?

CABBAGE WOMAN

You are going into the Marshes of Potatoes!

(To Miss Onion)

You and your gallant are going to the miller's!

MISS ONION

The disgrace!

1st KNIGHT o. S.

Hey Ma, how about us?

CABBAGE WOMAN

You're going to the hospital!

(Pause of general depression. The clock begins to strike. All slump back into their garbs.)

CURTAIN.

MILLSTONE.

SCENE IV.

The kitchen in Mack's bungalow. Two small windows are facing the yard. A door R. gives on the same yard with the barn and stable seen through the windows. The door L. leads into the partitioned half of the main room, now obviously a workroom for David. He is seen sitting at a table littered up with books and various apparatus, seemingly doing calculations on a sheet of paper. The rumbling of the mill is heard even more than before. Ruby in the kitchen is churning cream. Dave rises nervously several times, listening to the disturbing noise, finally he begins to walk the room. A while after, Myrtle enters R. carrying a bag with vegetables.

RUBY

Did you get the stuff?

MYRTLE

Hugh's sure cocky...

(Takes out some onions, radishes and a head of cabbage.)

RUBY

Let's see--

(Scrutinizes the cabbage doubtfully raising some of its leaves.)

That cabbage's sure rotten. Black an' rotten. An' rotten cabbage's sure poison. Take it back...

MYRTLE

He didn't charge it.

RUBY

That's why--I'd look twice fore I 'cept anything for nothing from Hugh. Never mind the pig'll have it for a change. Go make the salad there's lots o' things to do.

(Churns with renewed vigor)

DAVE

(Opens the door)

Who is making all this racket? Want to drive me mad?

RUBY

Oh...I'm real sorry...I'll go into the barn.

DAVE

Ma...Do you mind? My work, it is splitting up my head...

RUBY

I'm going in a minute...

(Lifts the churn and puts it down by the door R. Dave goes back to his room, sits down to work again.)

Myrtle, he's sore...I think you'd better give him a bite. Didn't eat much at table. Told me he'd like to eat by himself...

MYRTLE

Do you think so? How about a little pie?

RUBY

Sure! Don't make a noise...(Exit R.)

(Myrtle looks into the mirror, takes out from the icebox a cut of pie, enters David's room quietly unobserved by him until the closing of the door)

M I L L S T O N E S.

DAVE

(Jumps up)

Hell! What's wrong now? Didn't I tell you not to bother me?!

(Notices Myrtle's deep blush and rising tears, who shamefacedly turns towards the door.)

Wait! What did you want?

MYRTLE

Oh, nothing at all...Ma sent me in with this...

DAVE

Come here...don't mind me...I'm sorry I shouted. My work...Are you angry? What's this?

MYRTLE

Peach pie.

DAVE

(Takes the plate and puts it away on a chair)
I'll eat it later...but you mustn't do it next time. This room is not for--that.

(Sees Myrtle saddening again)

Well well...never mind...You're a good girl...Tell me, do you enjoy being a married woman?

MYRTLE

Yes, no, yes.

DAVE

(Laughs)

You know, you're a rollicking good girl...a sweet girl...

MYRTLE

Er...Dave...I'd like to know...about er...the secret...

DAVE

(Flares up)

What! Oh, I see...They sent you in to spy on me! The female of the species...pretty shrewd! Go! I'm busy!

(Myrtle frightened turns to go, David softened, tickles her under the chin until she smiles.)

That's the way...Let's see you go out with a little smile...

(Opens the door for her, Myrtle walks out into the kitchen smiling happily, David sits down to work. Ben and Hugh come in the back door. Ben carries a rake on his shoulders, his pants are rolled up to his knees and bare his mud-stained feet. He is wet to the waist. He throws the rake violently to the floor which proceeding causes another getting up of David, who after listening to the door for a while lights a cigarette and begins walking the room.)

HUGH

(Sarcastically)

Sh-h-h...why don't you walk on tiptoe?

MILLSTONES.

BEN
Oh, stop kiddin' will ye! I says I mean it!
HUGH

You can't make me believe you!

BEN
I says I mean it! Get me? I quit!

HUGH
Bet you'll change your mind...

BEN
Not if...I'm sick an' tired of this dirt-rakin' I'll quit before I get my death of cold--as did the old man. Get down every day down there, an' soak till your very bones begin to rot...Say, what I'd like to know is, why are you so damned set on my quittin', eh?

HUGH
Who me? You're wrong buddy, all wrong. Only thing that beats me is why a guy like you should waste yourself on the devil..an here.. (Points to Dave's room) to give a chance to a loafer like thkt...

BEN
Oh, I see. It's that eat rottin' in your mind, eh?

HUGH
Rats! Didn't you yourself put me wise to the grudge you're always bearin' him fer his high an' mighty ways? But I tell you this much: From now I quit meddlin' an' if you still want that job way down Coulter Creek don't come to me...

BEN
Aw, quit fussin'...

HUGH
(Regaining self-confidence, shouts)
Don't come to me I says!

BEN
(Trying to reconcile the seemingly angry Hugh begins to talk louder)
What do I care? I'll laugh 'em in the face..I'll let no loafers sponge it out on me! Get me? Here in this place, everybody as has a mouth'll have to work! (David listens)

HUGH
Sh-h-h! You're a bloomin' son of a fool! Why all this hellerin'?

BEN
I ain't afraid of anybody! An' don't you be neither. He won't tell his secrets anyhow. Everybody's tried his hand on him...

HUGH
You're all wrong. I'd try again if I was you--

BEN
Why don't you?

HUGH
Bet you he'll tell me! You wait here a minute...
(Goes with bravado into Dave's room)

DAVE
Well? Where do you get the nerve to come in here without knocking?

HUGH
Why all this fussin'? You're not the president o' the United States, are you? We're old pals, ain't we?

DAVE
What do you want? Don't you see I'm busy?

MILLSTONES.

HUGH

Busy? Whith what? Oh, that secret...I 'most forgot. Say Davie, how 'bout you an' me going into this thing together, eh? I know you're not a millionaire, or you wouldn't 'a come back to this dump of a hole. How if you told me 'bout that...

DAVE

(Opens the door mastering his overboiling anger with a cool)

I'm busy now!

HUGH

(Walks out deliberately)

Beggar on horseback!

(Dave slams the door then goes to the table and rests his head in his hands.)

BEN

(Had been listening at the door meets Hugh laughing)

Well?

HUGH

Well, what do you expect? I'm a stranger, ain't I? If he was my brother, why I'd raise hell!--I'd-- You know you're a sissy. And he knows it! Still he don't throw you out nohow. Why? 'Cause he's afraid o' you. Cause you're feedin' him, see? An' wait, I'll tell you somethin'--There ain't no secret. It's all a God-damned lie! A 'scuse fer loafin'!

BEN

What do I care, 'scuse, or no 'scuse. I quit. Time I quit!

DON

(Enter R.)

Hey you Ben...want to get on the wheel? Seesaw...playin'...

HUGH

What's he ravin' about?

BEN

Any time the river's drained he goes nuts. Wants to go on the wheel..

DON

(Hops around)

Up, down! up, down!

HUGH

An' he expects to come back alive?

BEN

You bet!

(They laugh)

DON

Are you comin'?

HUGH

(Points to Dave's room)

Go in there, he'll sure come.

DON

Sure?

(Hugh nods, Don goes into Dave's room)

HUGH

He'll come out feet first...

BEN

'S that so! More likely he'll let him keep company...

HUGH

No!

BEN

Wait'n see.

MILLSTONES.

(Both look through the key-hole. Don enters Dave's room, the latter smiles encouragingly and pats his back.)

DON

Are you goin' to put them little screws on my head?

DAVE

Not now, later.

DON

'N pluck the feathers out'o my head...the feathers... and then go play on the wheel, up down! up, down! (Hops)

DAVE

Quiet!

DON

I wana go, I wana run, I wana dance, I wana fly!

DAVE

Quiet! You're going to be quiet! Be still!

(Takes out a small case from the drawer)

Take this candy...

DON

Is it sweet?

DAVE

Sure!

Here, take this too, and go play!

(Don tastes it and makes a sour face)

(Gives him the pie. Don takes it and goes out C. But Ben and Hugh expecting him to come their way, bounce up and away from the door. David puts on his hat and coat.)

HUGH

See that?

BEN

Didn't I tell you? They're birds of a feather...

(David exits C.)

HUGH

(Looking through the key-hole)

He's gone!

RUBY

(Enters R.)

Why, Bennie, what are you doing here?

BEN

What's the matter, can't I come in the house any more?

RUBY

Now, in the middle of the day?

BEN

There's some as don't lift a finger, and get their grub anyhow...

RUBY

Iknew who's at the bottom of all this...

(Casts an angry look at Hugh who begins to whistle)

BEN

S'pose I have a little sense o' my own?

RUBY

Why, what's come over you anyhow, they drained the river an' need all the help?

MILLSTONES.

I quit!

BEN

Quit?

RUBY

Yes, ma-a-a-m!

BEN

Quit? Are you crazy? How about the job?

RUBY

I'm gona start up all fer myself!

BEN

Start up all fer yourself? Now in the rush?

RUBY

Yes m-a-a-m!

BEN

An' all out of a clear sky!

RUBY

I'm tired doin' all the dirty work. Me an' the wife. I'm tired of feedin' up loafers...

BEN

I told you I know who's at the bottom of this...I wish my old man was here...

RUBY

I'm sick of it!

BEN

What are you goin' to live on?

RUBY

Why, there's a clean overseer's job waitin' fer me right there in Coulter Creek...An' now Myrtle can have her city life...

BEN

Go ahead, I'm sure you'll be back soon enough.

RUBY

Who me? Never! I quit for keeps.

BEN

Mark my words, you'll be sorry, an' let me tell ye, you're jest a natural mean creature to go back on your folks!

RUBY

I'm mean, ain' I? How 'bout sonny? Hew about him? Ain't he mean? Ain't he yellow through an' through? To set here day in day out smokin' and takin' it easy?!

BEN

(Bangs open Dave's door and runs in, Ruby follows. He begins to throw about papers, and things.)

Look at this! Soft job, eh? Me too'd like to have some soft an' faney job!

(Hugh noses about the apparatus)

Don't you touch that! Leave that be, or I'm goin' to call in Pa! Put it back!

RUBY

(Myrtle enters frightened)

BEN

(Gets hold of the apparatus)

Why, I sure have a mind to smash this to bits!

MILLSTONES.

Don't!

MYRTLE
(Screams)

(Wrenches the apparatus from his hands and puts it back)

Say, what's that to you?

BEN

(Hugh whistles ironically)

RUBY

(Goes to the window and calls)

Pa! Pa!

MYRTLE

What's happened? What's happened? Why did you want to do that?

BEN

Go pack up, we're goin' away from this place!

MYRTLE

Why, what's happened?

BEN

You go an' pack I tell ye. Don't ax questions!

MACK

(Comes in a hurry C.)

Was you callin' me? What's a matter? Why are you here?

(Hugh had since Ruby's calling gradually moved nearer to the door, now with one swift movement he vanishes into the kitchen and thence through the back-door.)

What's up? (To Ben) What are ye doin' here at this time o' day?

RUBY

He's ravin' mad!

BEN

I don't care!

MACK

What's the matter?

RUBY

Wants to quit!

MACK

Quit?

RUBY

He's crazy!

MYRTLE

But why?

BEN

Go pack up I tell you, did ye hear me? Or...you can stay here...an' let folks talk anyway...

MYRTLE

Talk what?

BEN

Oh nothin'...just nothin'...

MACK

Why do you want to quit?

RUBY

'Count o' Dave...'Count o' Dave's doin' nothin'...

MACK

I'm doing the feedin' in this place...

MILLSTONES.

BEN
I should worry...You e'n go on feedin' him all you want, so long as I quit.

MACK
All right, get out!

BEN
Don't care if I lose my half o' the mill. Glad to be rid of it... you wouldn't get two cents for the old trap...

MACK
Get out!

DAVE
What happened?

BEN
Find it out soon enough...

(Exit G. all grow silent)
MYRTLE
Bennie, Bennie! (Exit)

RUBY
(To Dave)
Don't you worry...

DAVE
Is he leaving?

RUBY
How do you know?

DAVE
I met Hugh.

MACK
I'll break every bone in that skunk's body yet...!

RUBY
Going back on his own folks...

MACK
Let him.

RUBY
An' who's going to...

MACK
I can beat a dozen o' the likes of him!

RUBY
Yes, any get another attack an...

MACK
Anything's good enough to learn him a lesson!

(Exit into the kitchen
Ruby follows crying.
David alone looks hastily through his papers
and rearranges them into their former order. Somebody knocks at one of the kitchen windows.)

RUBY
You're wanted! Go quick!

(Exit Mack)

MYRTLE
(Comes dressed up and with a tear-stained face)
Ma...(Wipes her eyes)

RUBY
Going for sure?

MILLSTONES.

MYRTLE

Wen't listen to reason.

RUBY

Where is he now?

MYRTLE

Outside. Puttin' the trunk on the Ford.

RUBY

You mean it?

(Hastnes out R. Myrtle approaches Dave's door, pauses and knocks timidly.)

DAVE

Come in!

MYRTLE

(Enters)

I...came to say goodbye.

DAVE

Going to leave? Guess I'm to blame...

MYRTLE

Itt ain't you...I know who is to blame.

DAVE

What do you care, you're going to live in the city now.

MYRTLE

I don't care, I don't want to live in the city...With strangers.

DAVE

You must go where your man is going...

MYRTLE

I know, but...goodby...

(They clasp hands, suddenly Dave presses her to him in a long kiss. Myrtle tears herself away and runs out C.)

DAVE

(Walks up and down and stops to listen to the rumbling of the mill. By and by little utterances escape him.)

Maddening... The mule is obstinate...Let him... The privelege of the slave...Oh hell... quiet! All they need is listen...and then... Mad! Mad! Crazy Don...his kin... silence...silence...The great silence...until...

MACK

(Enters C.)

Was you talkin' to somebody?

DAVE

No. Is he gone?

MACK

Yes.

DAVE

My fault.

MACK

Let everything go to rack and ruin...learn him a lesson...

DAVE

For all that it would have been much better if I hadn't come home...

MILLSTONES.

MACK

That's why I came in here now. Came to tell you not to bother about it..You just go ahead an...

DAVE

And who is going to take his place, and the job?

MACK

Guess I can beat a dozen o' the likes of him...

(A calling and knocking at the window is heard)

DAVE

Are you sure?

MACK

Sure! You go ahead an' find that secret. It shouldn't take you very long now eh?

DAVE

Who knows?

MACK

What do you mean?

DAVE

It does not depend entirely on me...

MACK

Who does it depend on? Ain't you alone in this?

DAVE

Yes, but...

MACK

But what?

DAVE

That isn't all. Other factors must be taken into consideration..

MACK

Other--

DAVE

You wouldn't know if I told you...

MACK

THINK your old Pa's a blockhead?

DAVE

It's hard to explain. Sometimes a secret is bigger than a man's head...

MACK

How 'bout you? Ain't it too big for you? You have my brain...if it, ain't too big for you, guess you can tell me...

DAVE

I haven't got yet...It's playing hide and seek...Now it's here now it's there...

MACK

Then how do you know it's there at all?

DAVE

How do you know it's day?

MACK

I can see a light risin'

DAVE

I can see a light rising too.

MACK

MILLSTONES.

MACK

So where is it?

DAVE
(Pensively)

It may come...with my next meal.

MACK

Your next meal?

DAVE

My next meal. The things we eat are part of that...light. We all live on light. We eat light...we drink light...we breathe light...

MACK

Eat light, drink light? What kind of crazy talk is that?

DAVE
(Startled)

Crazy!...I told you wouldn't know...

MACK

An' I thought you was goin' to be a Doctor same as Doc Burt...Ma told me 'bout Crazy Don, 'n how you got to workin' his head all the time...

DAVE

ER...Pa...I wanted to ask you about--Crazy Don. Were there any other cases in the family?

MACK

You mean crazy people? Let's see now. Guess an uncle too--that would be-- wait wait, let's see...That would be a great uncle. Why? Why do you ask?

DAVE

Oh, just so. Did you say a great uncle?

(Both gaze at each other in silence. A calling and knocking at the window is heard.)

MACK

They're calling. Must go down before the water freezes up again....
(Ext kitchen. He's seen to roll up his pants and throw off his shoes., goes out the R. Dave, alone, takes from a drawer the diagram of a head's anatomy and compares it with his own in the mirror. Measures his skull with his hands, fingers his forehead, feels his nape at the base of the brain. Ruby comes quietly C. he does not notice her and remains busying himself. She watches him until through the mirror he becomes aware of her presence. He turns fiercely.)

DAVE

Who is there?

RUBY

Only me...don't get seeced like that!

DAVE

Where do you get this nasty habit of spying on me! "Don't get seeced" and all after you're doing your best to sear the life out of one!

RUBY

Why, what's the matter? Why are you so cranky?

DAVE

Cranky!

MILLSTONES.

RUBY

Look at the crazy things you're doing in the mirror! I thought...
got scared myself...

DAVE

"Crazy things" Studying anatomy are crazy things!

RUBY

Studying what?

DAVE

Never mind!

RUBY
(Cries)

Everything's just rotten!

DAVE

What's up again?

RUBY

Trouble enough as it is...

DAVE

Why then do you keep hounding me all of you? Why don't you leave
me alone for a while? Why don't you let me work?

RUBY

Work? What kind of work?

DAVE
(Laughs distractedly)

How about this?

RUBY

You call that work?

DAVE

What do you call it?

RUBY

It's not a man's job.

DAVE

Not a man's job? What's a man's job?

RUBY

A man's job is gettin' down to the bottom...get soakin' wet...
ply a shovel...

DAVE

Ply a shovel?

RUBY

Ply a shovel. Why I wish your Pa an' me had your kind of work...
wouldn't have to get down to the bottom of the river an' get soakin'
wet every blessed day...

DAVE

Every day?

RUBY

I wish he'd never got that mill from your grandpa...it's a nuisance.
An' now that Ben's woman's gone I'll have to do the work for two....

(Exit crying into the kitchen. Dave remains
sunk in thought for a few seconds, then as if
moved by some sudden resolution he gets up
crushing the anatomical paper and follows his
mother into the kitchen. There he throws off
his shoes, rolls his pants up to his knees, and
gets hold of the rake abandoned by Ben putting
it on his shoulders.)

RUBY

What are you doing? Where are you going?

MILLSTONES.

DAVE

I am going down...to do a man's job...
(Goes out the back door.)

RUBY
(Following)

Dave! Don't, don't !

CURTAIN

MILLSTONES.

SCENE V.

In the miller's barn. A door C. patched up with boards leads into the pigsty. A bigger one R.C. opens on the yard all covered with snow, and a new angle of the mill in the background. L.C. is a bin for grain adjoining a mound of grain sacks. An opening in the thatch right over the bin provides the barn with skylight. In the middle of the barn and opposite both doors is a large table. Ruby's churn and other kitchen utensils give the notion that the barn is often used for household activities. On the table is seen a huge plate of china, forks, spoons and a big kitchen knife. Mr. Radish, placed in an enamel basin on the table to one side of the plate faces Miss Onion standing in a frying pan right opposite. She is now stripped of her silk dress and jewelry. Her tiara gone, her head shaven, she stands forth in her underwear and weeps. Mr. Radish opposite is seen in his white union-suit, with only his black tail appended. His belly sticks out prominently.. The garments of both plants are scattered right next to them in strips of peelings. On a top board terminating the partition and forming a kind of sill between the barn and pigsty slouches the Cabbage Woman out of a tin pail, so that she can look freely down into the sty any time the pig grunts. Her leaves are wilted and blackish, and most of her finery is gone.

MR. RADISH

It's rather embarrassing...standing like this...neither here nor there.(Seans the ceiling) I can hear a fly buzzing; notion to settle down on me.

MISS ONION

Oh, is this the best you can think of? Now? Do you realize we are are about to go on the plate? It's a sacred moment...(Weeps)

MR. RADISH

My dear, calm yourself, you're going to pieces...

MISS ONION

Oh, men are cruel...(Kneels down in the pan)

MR. RADISH

Well, are you ready?

MISS ONION

Leave me alone for a while...I want to pray...

MR. RADISH

Make it snappy.

MISS ONION

(Casts up her eyes and sees Beau Wind in the open door R.C. His garments are of the same make as in his first appearance but everything is now of a flowing white, excepting the high hat, cravat and mittens which are of a cold blue.)

Beau Wind!

(General commotion. Mr. Radish glings to the rim of his basin, The Cabbage Woman to the cover of the pail leaning near by, and Miss Onion to the handle of the pan.)

ALL
(In turn)

Beau Wind! - Beau Wind

MILLSTONES.

MISS ONION

Oh, dear Mr. Wind...Really God has sent you here...You see, we're about to go on the plate...

BEAU WIND

Congratulations! (Waves his hat)

MISS ONION

Thanks! (B. Wind makes a motion to withdraw) Oh, please please, don't go...I'm so afraid...

BEAU WIND

What of?

MISS ONION

The gate...It may seem queer that after all those ardent prayers to get there, I'm a bit...shaky...I do wish you'd save me...from the unknown...If at least I knew who is the keeper of that gate...but as it is...I was always a poetic soul...only nobody realized...I'm willing to prove it now. I'm willing to lead a life in the open...

(Beau Wind laughs, and is again about to move on, when the Cabbage Woman cries out hoarsely.)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Hullo there! Wait a minute! I want to speak with you!

BEAU WIND

Is that you auntie? I was looking for you. I'll be back in a minute...(Disappears)

MISS ONION

Are you there too?

CABBAGE WOMAN

Seeing is believing.

MISS ONION

Are you too going on the plate? Who with?

CABBAGE WOMAN

Curiosity killed a cat... (The grunting of a pig is heard)

MISS ONION

(Frightened)

Listen, what's that?

MR. RADISH

How should I know? Seems I've heard the sound before...Phew, I'm sweating...

MISS ONION

I know, you coward, it's because you're afraid!

CABBAGE WOMAN

It's the miller's pig grunting (Looks down into the sty) He's getting a sumptuous meal today...Ha ha ha!

MISS ONION

Listen to that...

MR. RADISH

Croaking...(Aloud) I say Madam Cabbage, can you give me any information...

BEAU WIND

(Enters through the door)

Well, here we are...

(Cabbage Woman beckons with a finger he goes to her.)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Roll me up here, nearer to the sty, so that we can talk quietly.

BEAU WIND

I am not a tornado.

MILLSTONES.

CABBAGE WOMAN

Come now, exert yourself, or I'll tell them about your senility and they'll lose their respect

(B.Wind groaning shoves her up to desired position. They are seen whispering together.)

MISS ONION

Now they're close together. Perfectly scandalous... What does he see in her, anyway?

MR. RADISH

(Nodding his brow)

She's a woman of means. Lots of clothes. Soon she'll die and he'll get hold of the property. I heard she's put him in her will, and that beggar of a wind... I wish he would fan me some, phew...

MISS ONION

But you said you wouldn't associate with him

CABBAGE WOMAN

Are you quite sure?

BEAU WIND

I'm positive. They were brought here to the mill from the farm. I recognized their voices among the grain, because they were the only ones that escaped the thrash-machine in their clothes (About to withdraw)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Remember I put you in my will...

BEAU WIND

What more do you want?

CABBAGE WOMAN

Nothing more, except that you open the door to the pigsty...

BEAU WIND

What do you want with the pigsty?

CABBAGE WOMAN

You know I'm to go into the pig's gate today, so I'm trying to save myself... If you open that door the pig'll escape and then there might be a chance for me too...

BEAU WIND

Smells fishy, but...

CABBAGE WOMAN

Remember my will...

BEAU WIND

If I catch you doing tricks to any of my family... I swear by the broom of Pluto... (Sniffs) What's this? I smell somebody coming. I'll beat it before the door closes. (Hurries out)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Don't forget to be back in time!

(Beau Wind has hardly left the barn when a chute is let down from the open side of the thatch discharging a load of grain into the bin. As the chute is withdrawn there are seen to rise the Boy and Girl ears of corn. They are now both stripped of some their bristles. They shake their coats.

GIRL EAR of CORN

Where are we?

BOY EAR of CORN

Quite safe sweetheart...

MILLSTONES.

Are you hurt?

BOY EAR o. C.

Not at all.

GIRL EAR o.C.

Look who is here! If it isn't the young couple..How do you do!

MISS ONION

Delighted to see you! How's politics?

MR. RADISH

Beg your pardon, but I don't remember...

BOY EAR o.C.

MISS ONION

What! You mean you don't remember we lived in the same neighborhood? (Both shake their heads) Why, I even remember the secret...Your little lady love...the Godlight...(Both shrink and turn away) Well, has it brought you any prosperity?

GIRL EAR o. C.

Why, Madam, what do you mean?

MISS ONION

Oh dear, don't pretend! By the way, do you know we are going on the plate today?

BOY EAR o. C.

Congratulations!

MISS ONION

Thanks!

BOY EAR o. C.

Oh yes, Now I remember quite well...What has become of the old lady, a witch I believe?

MISS ONION

S-h-h-h...She's right there on the sill...

(The Cabbage Woman pretends to sleep, but opens her eyes occasionally to shoot a derisive glance.)

MR. RADISH

And how did you get here, if I may ask?

BOY EAR o. C.

We came by motor

MISS ONION

Motors are quite the thing now, aren't they?

MR. RADISH

Good thing you have the Godlight and can move around and make others move...if I...

CABBAGE WOMAN

(Jumps up alertly)

Hello my dears! Come right here and make yourselves at home...I have some news for you...

(The pair approach and look around mistrustfully)

Sit down, you're welcome! How are you my dears? You look..er... quite sihevelled...

BOY EAR o. C.

It's the surroundings. Suppose we'll get used to it...

CABBAGE WOMAN

I hope so... May I know the reason of your coming here? I suppose it's a secret?

GIRL EAR o. C.

You can tell her. She knows anyhow...

BOY EAR o. C.

We came in search of the gate...

M I L L S T O N E S.

CABBAGE WOMAN

Do you expect to enter together?

BOTH

Together!

GIRL EAR o. C.

(Approaches the open door)

See, right there is the mill!

CABBAGE WOMAN

(In a hushed voice)

Would you like to have an amulet to protect your love?

BOY EAR o. C.

I would.

CABBAGE WOMAN

Then climb up here on the sill...

(Shows him the poppy Beau Wind had given her in the previous scene, Boy Ear jumps up spontaneously. As soon as he is securely on the sill Beau Wind slides down through the open side of the thatch and begins to batter in the door of the pigsty.)

MISS ONIO

(In a panic hiding her face in her hands)

They're coming! They're coming to fetch us!

MR. RADISH

Don't be afraid, be brave my dear!

(Shivering himself from fear he covers his eyes with his tail.)

CABBAGE WOMAN

It's rather difficult you know... I understand of course the lady's reluctance to let go of her companion even though she has no need of him any longer. It's a habit. But you, a man... Between us, you know...

GIRL EAR o. C.

(Calling to her mate)

Sweetheart!

CABBAGE WOMAN

Never mind her calling! Don't answer for a while... Let her get used to being alone... It'll do her a world of good...

BOY EAR o. C.

But how can I?

CABBAGE WOMAN

Weakling! It's for her own good... Get right in the pail for one second I'll tell you how to use it...

(Boy Ear does so. Girl Ear is again calling Boy Ear is about to respond but the Cabbage Woman hastily puts the poppy up to his nose, throws a leaf over him and tucks him under. The grunting of the pig is heard. Beau Wind meanwhile had been busy battering in the door, and having succeeded slips back through the loft.)

GIRL EAR o. C.

(Walks back into the interior looking for her mate.)

CABBAGE WOMAN

Who are you looking for?

GIRL EAR o. C.

Where is he?

MILLSTONES.

CABBAGE WOMAN

How should I know? Guess he's gone in search of the gate...

GIRL EAR O. C.

Alone?

CABBAGE WOMAN

My dear, men nowadays are not as self-sacrificing as are women...
What did you expect anyhow?

GIRL EAR O. C.

I don't believe it!

(Looks around with rest in all the corners, inquiring of Mr. Radish and Miss Onion who had been hiding their faces in fear. Failing to find him she goes back to the Cabbage Woman.)

Which way did he go?

(A loud grunting is heard from within)

CABBAGE WOMAN

I think I saw him go in there...

(Points towards the door of the sty.)

GIRL EAR O. C.

In there?

(Goes in cautiously. As soon as she disappears the grunting becomes louder, and the door is being slammed to from within.)

MISS ONION

(Who has seen the last act rises in her pan and shouts to Mr. Radish:)

O-h-h-h!

MR. RADISH

What's wrong?

MISS ONION

O-h-h-h! The pig! The Godlight! The Godlight has gone in to the pig!

(The witch laughs aloud vacillating for joy until she topples over into the sty with a shriek and lifting of arms.)

CURTAIN.

SCENE VI.

Two weeks later at the entrance of the flourmill. It is an old-fashioned structure with a few stone steps leading into the basement of the mill surrounded with a kind of stone plastered trench. R. is a highway leading to Mack's bungalow which is seen from afar, and to the left is the little wooden bridge crossing the Pawtucket River whose rumbling is heard underneath. Farmers carrying grist on their backs are seen to go in and out occasionally. Snow all around.

CRAZY DON

(Sits on one of the steps sucking a sweetmeat and sings)

"There was an old woman and she had a little pig" (Grunts)

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!"

"It didn't cost much for it wasn't very big" (Grunts)

"Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!"

"That little pig did lots of harm;"

"It made little tracks all 'round the barn."

"That little pig died for the want of bread."

"Wasn't that an awful death!"

"The old woman mourned, and she sobbed, and she cried;"

"Then she lay right down and died."

"The old man died because of grief."

"Wasn't that a sad relief!"

"There they lay, the only three,"

"Old man, old woman and little piggie"

"There they lay upon the shelf;"

"If you want any more you can sing it yourself!"

(After the last stanza is sung Dave emerges from the basement door all mud-bespattered, so that his rubber-boots up to his knees are unrecognizable. He looks everwrought, downcast. After a weak attempt at removing the dirt from his legs and clothes he leans on the rake.)

DON

(In a funeral voice)

It's coming! It's coming...

DAVE

(Mechanically)

It's coming?

RUBY

(Appears from the rear of the mill with a dinner-pail walks towards David. Don sighting her goes into the mill.)

Here's dinner...

DAVE

Later.

MILLSTONES.

RUBY

Since you started workin' you don't eat nothin'--'stead of eatin' more as other folks do...

DAVE

Since I started working...

RUBY

Don't you like beans no more?

DAVE

Yes, I do. (Sits down on the steps)

RUBY

Davie...you know...I'm just havin' the time o' my life...You know Hugh--the grocer? He's jest gettin' green ~~from~~ envy. Thought we'd have to close up. Thought you couldn't do a man's job...Have a bite Davie...The beans are jest fine...Big chunk o' pork in there...bigger! Pa's--Said you was too soft... Wait'n see. He's a tenderfoot. Jest a natural born quitter! An' now--I told 'em, I'm sure you'll stay...

DAVE

Sure?

RUBY

Absolutely sure I says to 'm. Wonder what they'll say next winter?

DAVE

(Flies up)

Next winter!

RUBY

Why...yes, in a year from now...

DAVE

A year! A whole year!

RUBY

Here's your Pa. Been at it forty five years.

DAVE

Forty five years!

RUBY

Hope to see you an' your kids settled before we die...

~~DAVE~~

Kids!

RUBY

God willin' you take a good woman to wife, there'll be kids...
(Dave goes restlessly into the basement, Ruby follows.)
I told 'em you'd become a regular fellow...(Exit)

(Myrtle comes from the right dressed as from a journey. Looks around cautiously before she approaches the entrance of the basement, goes to one of the flower-stained windows and steals a peep inside. Ruby comes out again carrying the dinner dishes. Mack follows her chewing. Myrtle hides in the crotch of the trench.)

MACK

Isay, Ru, did you notice anything queer?

RUBY

Notice, queer? What do you mean?

MACK

Don't like the way he acts. Caught 'm several times talkin' to himself...An' when a man starts talkin' to himself--

RUBY

Oh, that's nothin' he's jest repeatin' what's in the books...his learnin'.

MILLSTONES.

MACK

Don't like the way he's workin' unnatural like--as if-- as if--
he was tryin' to kill himself...

RUBY

Ben Used to do the same. Gee I'd like to have a look at him...I'm jus
lonesome for him...Guess he's homesick too, poor boy...

MACK

Ben used to show off, but here-- it's diferent...Wish we had a mill
holiday twice a year, so's I could send him off fer a spell...

RUBY

Must you wait till the first Monday of September? Give'm any
Monday! (Tries to arrange her dishes to better advantage.)

MACK

That's right, an' close up, eh?

(A calling is heard from within Mack goes back. Don
comes from the basement, walks up to where Myrtle
stands hidden.)

DON

"There was a old woman and she had a little pig, Hugh! (Sees Myrtle)
Gimme a piñeh (Myrtle motions him to be quiet.)

MYRTLE

S-h-h-h!

RUBY

(Sees her and runs up to her.)

Look who is here!

(They embrace)

How's Ben?

MYRTLE

Fine.

RUBY

Come in the house have a bite, an' rest up.

MYRTLE

I ain't hungry...

(Follows her reluctantly casting hidden glances
back at the mill.)

Ma... er...where is Pa?

RUBY

Pa an' Dave's in the mill.

MYRTLE

Dave? Is he really workin'?

RUBY

Thank God... 'Spite o' that skunk Hugh who stirred up all the trouble.
Durst'nt come here no more. Pa'll thrash him!

(Both disappear at the turn in the direction
of the house, Don follows them singing,
soon after Dave comes out sits down on the
steps dejectedly. Mack follows him
stealthily, observing him for some time
then approaches.)

MACK

'Course, it's none o' my business, but I thought...you act kindo'
queer...

DAVE

Queer? Why, don't I do my work?

MACK

You do your work all right. Even better'n I expected. That's
just it... 'cause you work too much...

MILLSTONES.

DAVE

Then why don't you fix that leak? What's the matter with that old trap anyway?

MACK

I'll tell ye what's the matter. You know we need a new rack. The water's undermined the sill at one end, and there were several bad breaks which were patched already, You saw that, didn't ye?

DAVE

I did.

MACK

You know now why the flow of the water's slow. It's slow aint? but it ain't slow to draw all the anchor ice an' plaster up the rack, see? An' all that floatin' grease 'n scum that you're busy workin' at, an' that's so hard to clean 'count of it's bein' vertical, see?

DAVE

Well?

MACK

You know what's wrong? It's them one 'half inch spaces between the slats. Yes sir. Too big! You know now where the blocks of wood an' sticks come from, don't ye?

DAVE

I don't understand. Where is that leak?

MACK

Near the outside lower corner o' the feeder. That's a different story. To stop the leak you have to fill the trench in on both sides o' the piling with new puddlin'. Wait, that ain't all. You got to take out the old posts an' put in new ones, an' that needs some real Georgia Pine. Plankin's got to be patched. All in all a matter of 3000 bucks!

DAVE

Three thousand...And yet you want me to take it easy...

MACK

You can't fool me. There's somethin' wrong for all that...

DAVE

Well then--since you insist...I'll own up: I can't stay here any longer...(Pause)

MACK

So Hugh was right after all...

DAVE

To hell with Hugh! There are Hughs the world over! That was the reason I ran away from the big city. I thought here, in this quiet spot, far from the infernal din and racket I'll be able to...

MACK

An' did I meddle? Of your own free will you came down here...

DAVE

Yes, that's why. Because you did not meddle. I wish you had meddled a little more. It would have awakened a stronger power of resistance. Become an open struggle. It would have been easier for me to fight. Trouble was, you all kept kind of quiet. It was a silent contempt for me and my doings. And not so much you as your lined, worn faces. Your bent backs and sinuous hands, your mud-bespattered clothes boomed louder than canon. And that constant infernal racket of the mill, that was calling! Calling! Calling!

MACK

Don't quite get you, you mean because we didn't meddle that you... that's more than this blockhead o' mine can...

DAVE

It was worse than the call of steel and stone. Worse than the machine in the big city!

MILLSTONES.

MACK

As much as I can see from this fancy talk, you mean to go back, ain't it?

DAVE

I do.

MACK

Where?

DAVE

Where?

MACK

Yes, where?

(A calling and knocking on the window. Mack goes within.)

DAVE

Where?

CURTAIN

SCENE VII.

(Same afternoon. The setting as in the fourth scene.)

DON

(Talking to the kitchen table.)

You stand straight an' don't move until I tell ye... (Hops away watching it, then back to the same spot.) I told you not to move you old hag! Never mind you're an aunt! Why don't ye cover yer legs, eh? Ha, ha, ha! For shame! (Goes to cupboard) I'm gona give you a lickin' in the soft spot, 'cause you don't care to wipe yer nose... You son of a gun, Hughie! (Hops around) Ringa ringa Resie! (Goes to chair) Give us a pinch girlie... Let your footsie tootsie fly up to heaven! Fly high! Fly high!

(Ruby and Myrtle enter R.)

RUBY

What are ye doin' here crazy?

DON

It's comin'! It's comin'!

RUBY

I get the creeps to listen to that lunatic....

MYRTLE

The chickens are dying out...

RUBY

Everything's goin' to rack and ruin...

MYRTLE

Ma...I'm terrible homesick...

RUBY

Me to...

MYRTLE

He just won't listen to reason...

MILLSTONES.

RUBY

I wish he would.

MYRTLE

If it was up to me...The minute he hears me mention the place, he get wild. Hugh's poisoning his mind...

DON

Girlie, gimme a pinch...

RUBY

He's gettin' worse every day. You beat it!

DON

It's comin'! It's comin'!

MYRTLE

(Pinches his cheek gently) Don's face melts in joy. (grunts.)

Donnie...you mustn't talk that way...

DON

Some more...some more...

RUBY

Go tell uncle an' Dave Myrtle's here. Go!

DON

Some more...some more!

MYRTLE

First you go, an' when you come back you'll get some more...

DON

Get some more...get some more...(Exit R.)

RUBY

How do you like livin' in the city?

MYRTLE

Thought I was missin' the time of my life...When you're in the country you don't know what to think. I wish Ben came back here..

How...all this crashin' about?

RUBY

Newton...Guess you can make him forget?

MYRTLE

I'll try 'em over.

RUBY

Well, goin' to milch the cow. Why don't you take off your things?

MYRTLE

Must go back today. Promised Ben to be back.

RUBY

Want to see the cow?

MYRTLE

I'm tickled...but er...I'd like to rest up a bit...here...(Sits down)

RUBY

Sure, didn't I ask ye?(Exit)

(Myrtle alone goes stealthily into Dave's room, and touches longingly the things that are Dave's. However, an increased noise, drives her out promptly from the room back into the kitchen. Before she has time to ascertain the direction of the noise Dave enters. Myrtle on sighting his unsomely appearance retreats instinctively, showing undisguised dismay.)

MYRTLE

Why, however...is that you Dave?

MILLSTONE.

DAVE

Looks like it. Why, what's wrong? Don't like the mud? (Laughs)
You ought to be used to it...

MYRTLE

Not on you...Ben's different...

DAVE

I see. You do prefer the white collar, eh? I almost feel like
dressing up for you.

MYRTLE

I thought...

DAVE

Thought what?

MYRTLE

You did some other kind of -- work.

DAVE

One should think that whatever is good enough for your husband, is
good enough for me?

MYRTLE

You...?

DAVE

I'm doing a man's job, now, I'm a man, see!

(Grabs her into his arms
Myrtle scared repels him.)

Don't want to be touched by a dirty mouth?
(Laughs. Ben and Hugh enter R. with a catch-you-red-
handed expression.)

BEN

(To Dave sarcastically)

Well, how do you like it?

DAVE

Fine.

BEN

Mud-baths is healthy...good medicine for swelled heads...

HUGH

If you'd-a gone in with me, things mighta turned out different...
(Dave turns toward his door.)

BEN

(To Myrtle)

What are you doin' here all the time?(To Dave) Wait a minute! Don't
sneak away like a scared rabbit! I wants to say this...You got my
lousy job, you got the dirt, an' now you can have her!

MYRTLE

Bennie!

(Dave turns with a calm but menacing expression clutches Ben,
shakes him and hurls him against the wall. Goes out left
into his own room, and thence behind the main room's part-
ition.)

BEN

You can stay here, with your lover...I'm through!

MYRTLE

You sneak! You lying sneak! You snared me into this!(To Hugh) an
you...here, take this!(Slaps him in the face)

HUGH

Hey, hey, whats that?

MYRTLE

Get out of here, or I'll call in the mill- hands and they'll thrash
you within an inch of your life!(Runs out)

MILLSTONES.

BEN

(Surprised and with growing possessive pride.)

Some girl, this, eh? Plucky an' smart!

(Walks out after his wife,
Hugh sourfaced follows.)

(Dave comes clean and all dressed up as in his first appearance; carries some papers, and parts of the apparatus. Puts the latter into the burning stove, then begins to burn the sheets singly, scanning each paper for the fraction of a second before burning it.)

MYRTLE

(Reenters)

Dave!

DAVE

Yes?

MYRTLE

What are you doing?

DAVE

Hiding it.

MYRTLE

Hiding? But you're burning it, destroying it!

DAVE

You can't destroy anything... Burning means... to hide a little light in the darkness. For a little while. To rejuvenate it... To hide it for a younger and fresher world, that is both, old and young like a great thought...

(A knocking and loud calling is heard in the window.)

MYRTLE

All dressed up... are you going away?

DAVE

Maybe.

MYRTLE

Take me with you...

DAVE

Where to?

MYRTLE

Any place you go... (Cries) I want to work for you...

DAVE

And your man?

MYRTLE

I don't care!

(Ruby and Don enter carrying a can with milk)

RUBY

Spilled it all!

DON

It's comin'!

RUBY

Why, Davie!

DAVE

Yes, Ma...

RUBY

All dressed up... where are you goin'?

DAVE

Oh, just down the old mill...

MILLSTONES.

Back to work, in this?

RUBY

I'm going to meet somebody...

DAVE

It's comin'! It's comin'!

DON

(Dave goes to the the door, steps there for a while contemplating Don, then turns back to him.)

DAVE

Do you want to come along?

Don

Where?

DAVE

Where? To....play...there...on the wheel.

DON

(Eagerly overjoyed)

Up down! Up, down! There was an old woman and she had a little pig.. (Grunts. Dave links Don's arm in his; both exeunt C. They are seen going into the direction of the mill. Myrtle goes to the window looking after them.

RUBY

Well, all I can say is, if you want to stay with us, I'll be only too glad. You got to learn him a lesson. He'll be after you pretty quick (Goes to the oven) Look at this! The flame's turned green.. an' now it's blue...all colors...

MYRTLE

I know. I seen it...Two brothers an'...(Looks through the window more intensely, then throws it open and leans out obliquely; screams. Ruby runs up frightened. A big noise is heard from the outside.)

CURTAIN

M I L L S T O N E S.

SCENE VIII.

A highway. A truck marked S.C.D. and loaded with garbage is seen going down hill. On the wagon are some of our old friends, the plants, changed almost to unrecognizability, jolting along on top of it. There is seen Miss Onion her purple tatters hanging rather loosely about her, some grey wisps of hair streaming down to all sides, her bosom gone. Right close to her is seated Mr. Radish. He too is a sorry sight. His white union suit had turned very yellow, and stained with all kinds of colored patches. He is constantly trying to readjust some of his old time coat, turned greyish, and hanging in irregular strips of peelings over his shoulders. Half of his belly is gone, as if cut perpendicularly (which actually took place). Only the black long tail is still seen rat-like in its curve, but a little withered. All around he looks as if cut in half.

MISS ONION

There is going to be a storm. I just feel it in my broken bones... Don't lean on me so heavily, my neck hurts me since the operation.

MR. RADISH

You, with your operation! As if though nobody ever had an operation before!

MISS ONION

Of course, you must have all the sympathy to yourself...

MR. RADISH

Who spoke of sympathy? But you can't deny that I too...

(Points to his flat side)

MISS ONION

Nothing like to what I went through! Why, when they put me under the knife...

(A figure suddenly pops up from under the miscellany of the truck. It is none other than the third of the Sister Tomatoes. Her dress is now full of black patches and torn. She too has become thin. She leads by the hand the 1st Knight of Spinach who walks on crutches and has seemingly been badly dealt with. One eye is bandaged. They stand up in the same can.)

3d. S. Tomato

I though I heard familiar voices... (Looks at Miss Onion with scrutiny) I beg your pardon Madam, but it seems to me, that...

MISS ONION

(Condescendingly)

Oh yes, I remember you... Aren't you one of three sisters?

3d S. TOMATO

Yes, ma-a-an. I'm very glad to see you... My, but you've changed!

MISS ONION

(Alertly on the defensive)

You look terrible! How is it my dear you're so run down? I had a terribly terribly bad operation. There was no hope for my life...

3d S. TOMATO

Too bad... And here is--your gentleman friend?

MISS ONION

That's him.

3d S. TOMATO

The years have been more kind to him...

M I L E S T O N E S.

MISS ONION

It's always so, with ladies appraising a gentleman...But tell me dearie, how did you get here? I thought you were going to be canned?

3d S. TOMATO

So I was. Only I spoiled the show for them. The minute they put me in the can I committed hari-hari...

MISS ONION

You don't say!

MR. RADISH

I admire your courage! (With a look at Miss Onion) Only thing I can say is that martyrs are born and not made...

MISS ONION

Too bad you didn't think of that before!

(Flirtatiously to the Knight of Spinaeh)

Why, if it isn't...

KNIGHT o. S.

Now you've guessed!

MISS ONION

How did you manage?

S. TOMATO

Poor dear. He had a terrible time of it. He was cooked.

MR. RADISH

He certainly deserves the red cross! Young man, any time I get an opportunity, I shall interfere on your behalf...

KNIGHT o. S.

I'd much rather prefer an egg...

MISS ONION

Very romantic...But how did you escape?

MR. RADISH

Hope you didn't desert. Hope you did your bit...?

KNIGHT o. S.

As I was thrown into the trap, I lay as if stunned by the darkness, then all of a sudden I felt myself rolling down a very smooth surface back into the light...You see, the fence had no pickets...

S. TOMATO

He did it unintentionally, see? My hero! (Embraces him)

MR. RADISH

What is that between the two of you? Hope you're not affected by these loose morals? Hope it's on the level?

S. TOMATO

Him and me is going to settle down together.

MR. RADISH

Where?

S. TOMATO

As soon as we land...there by a little brooklet in a soft warm, dark home...

MISS ONION

(To Knight o. S.)

I thought you were always against settling down?

KNIGHT o. S.

(Sighs)

What can you do?

MR. RADISH

Don't you see his life is spoiled anyway?

MILLSTONES.

(While they talk a moaning is heard. They all listen.)

MISS ONION

What's this?

KNIGHT o. S.

It's Beau Wind. There must be a suicide. Any time there is an un-natural death he moans like that...I've heard him in hospitals.

MR. RADISH

That Wind chap...He was in a fearful temper last time I saw him...

MISS ONION

Ugh! there is a chill creeping down my spine. Nice company for a journey like this... To think we might be taken to the sea... Let's talk about cheerful things...

S. TOMATO

I met him today, he was very gentle...He was so with me...

MISS ONION

Do let's talk about cheerful things!

(As they talk the King of Spades is blown on the wagon. He wears a paper card costume true to the conventional design, two heads and all, only the upper head is real, sticking out through a round hole and dressed up exactly like its double. Shouts:)

KING of SPADES

What next!

(Mr. Garlic a brass trumpet in his mouth lands right next to him. He is dressed in a light tan costume, his back is bent, and the whole shape is formed after the root of a garlic. Before the king recovers from his amazement another shape flies up. It is formed after a chicken bone that has been cracked for the marrow. He breathes heavily, and falls down exhausted and prone on the heap. Mr. Garlic blows a fanfare.)

KING of SPADES

(Outraged to Mr. Garlic)

What are you following me about, eh?

MR. GARLIC

Your Royal Highness...A king must have a herald...

MISS ONION

(To the rest who have been standing there and contemplating the advent.)

What do you think of that? Royalty in exile!

(Both women try to look smug)

MR. RADISH

We, on this here wagon do not take much stock in royalty, do we? Still, I'd like to get an introduction...(Mr. Garlic blows his trumpet)

KING of SPADES

Shut up!

(Mr. Garlic)stops.)

MISS ONION

Who is this person anyway)

MR. RADISH

Don't you see he is a musician!

MISS ONION

He's too loud. Not a low note...

M I L L S T O N E S.

KNIGHT o. S.

Nowadays, if one wants to be heard, he has to be loud, in this age of steel...

MR. GARLIC

Your Royal Highness, I really can't see why I am in such disfavor. Seeing you know my pedigree...my relations to royalty the world over down to the great Pharaohs, Caesars, Napoleon...I am a match for great leaders only, not to speak of my artistic achievements like grand opera...and...(Blows)

MISS ONION

Simply awful!

MR. RADISH

Don't say so. He might come handy in introducing us to the king.

MISS ONION

(Acidly)

How?

MR. RADISH

Wait'n see.

(Takes up the tip of his tail and tickles Mr. Garlic's neck. The latter turns around blowing full in his face, he topples over with an "Oh!" As Mr. Garlic turns away, he gets up again after much difficulty.)

MISS ONION

I told you so!

MR. CHICKEN BONE

(Who has moved gradually nearer to the center now suddenly rises and begins to address the audience.)

The crowned rascal!

(Miss Onion looks him up and down in his poor cracks and snobs him.)

S. TOMATO

And who are you?

KNIGHT o. S.

Don't you see he is Chicken Bone?

MR. CHICKEN BONE

I prefer calling myself an industrial slave. A victim of this rotten chewing system...

(Mr. Radish makes a smart face.)

MR. RADISH

An anarchist!

KNIGHT o. SPINACH

You too brother have been cooked...

MR. CHICKEN BONE

Cooked! Cracked and drained for the very marrow! And who do you think is responsible for it?(Points to the king) He! You shall die!

(Breaks a crack off his costume and stabs the king through the paper making a big hole.)

THE KING

Help! Help!

MR. GARLIC

The king has been assassinated! His majesty is dying! A scion of the noble house of Spade! One of the oldest dynasties!

(Mr. Radish throws swiftly his tail around Mr. Chicken Bone's neck, and stifles him, the other struggling to get away. Finally he remains lying still.)

MILLSTONES.

(72)

Oh, I am dying!

THE KING

MR. RADISH

(Bows very low)

I'm sorry Your Majesty...Very very sorry...But I did my best...
You see the villain is dead.

THE KING

Dead? Praised be the Ase... I wish you had come earlier...I see
a soldier...if you had lent him to me...it might have been avoided...
Kneel down you brave soul...I shall stamp the seal of nobility on
your brow before I die...I shall (Breathes with difficulty) I shall...
dub you Knight of the Belch!...(Dies)

MR. RADISH

(With glee)

Knight of the Belch!

MISS ONION

And I am Lady of the Belch!

MR. GARLIC

Let's celebrate...(Blows)

MR. RADISH

He was the king's bodyguard.

MISS ONION

How lovely!(To Mr. Garlic suavely) I think you're very gifted...

(The wagon as if nearing its goal, begins to approach
exit.)

MR. RADISH

We here on this wagon believe in true democracy, we send our brothers
freely to be cooked for any good course, but at the same time see
that justice is done to every individual, be he king or beggar!

KNIGHT o. S.

Three cheers! Ra ra, ra! Radish Radish Radish!

(The moaning again is heard, all quiet down)

MISS ONION

Knight is coming on...I'm getting tired...I do wish I could go to
bed...

(S.Tomato yawns, a thin voice is heard 2d Pea is seen emerging)

2nd PEA

How do you do friends! Do you know me? I am one of the orphans.

MISS ONION

(In a bullying voice)

How did you get here?

2nd PEA

(With a tearful voice)

I...I'm...I went into the gravy with my sisters and brothers to get
drowned, but I got caught in a gentleman's mustaches, and I rolled
off into the gutter...

MISS ONION

Go to bed now...It's time for little orphans to go to bed...(Yawns)
roll up here I'll cover you up with my dress

(Pea rolls over, Miss Onion tucks her
in.)

Are you comfortable? The darling...she's already snoozing...Sh-h-h...

(All begin to doze off, the wagon disappears entirely from view.
As the space becomes empty, there is seen the Boy Ear of Corn
kneeling with a sack on his shoulders. Bear Wind appears from

MILLSTONE.

(the right. He is now in black gauze. The moaning increases. He stoops occasionally and picks up various things like fallen leaves, paper and other refuse fallen from the wagon, and hides them in his folds... Voices are heard along the road: "Oh dear Daddy Wind, take me along and burry me!" "A burrying place!" "A soft dark spot!" Take me along! Beau Wind stoops to all of them and picks them up, until he comes to the spot where kneels the Boy Ear of Corn.)

BEAU WIND

You...? What are you carrying on your back?

BOY EAR

The pig's stomach...The Godlight is in there...

BEAU WIND

The Godlight?

BOY EAR

The Godlight.

BEAU WIND

Shall I take you along?

BOY EAR

Burry me by the roadside. When spring comes to release us we shall knock at the gate of every passer-by...

(Beau Wind throws his drapery over him,
bells ring out.)

CURTAIN.